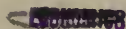


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THE

SPEECH

OF

THE MARQUIS OF LANSDOWN,

ON

FOREIGN COMMERCE;

SPOKEN IN THE HOUSE OF LORDS.

[*Now first revised and corrected for the Pamphleteer.*]



LONDON.

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1821,

THE
S P E E C H,

&c. &c.

THE Marquis of LANSDOWN rose, in pursuance of the notice he had given, of a motion for a committee to inquire into the means of extending the foreign trade of the country. So much did he feel the importance and magnitude of the subject, that he apprehended no sense of duty, however great, would have been sufficient to induce him to undertake the bringing it forward, had he not entertained a well-founded hope of experiencing every indulgence from the House. Under the circumstances, however, in which he had thought it necessary to propose to their Lordships the appointment of a committee, he did not suppose that it could be necessary for him to say much to justify himself for having assumed that task. He certainly felt most strongly the weight of the task, and would have been glad to have seen it in the hands of any noble Lord more able to do justice to it, but would have felt still more satisfaction had his Majesty's ministers taken the lead in originating some measure, either in that or in the other House of Parliament. Several years had now passed away, since the pressure of public distress engaged the attention of every friend to humanity and the country. That the noble Lord opposite omitted to propose any measure of relief, was not, therefore, sufficient to excuse their Lordships for neglecting to inquire into the state of the evil, and to look for a remedy. Those threatening clouds which some years ago began to darken the horizon had gradually increased, and now wore a more awful and ominous aspect than ever. It was then impossible that their Lordships could be justified in longer abstaining from investigating the causes of the distress under which the country suffered. He felt it to be his duty to draw the attention

of their Lordships to one in particular, and to propose an inquiry into the state of the foreign trade of the country ; at the same time, in proposing that limited inquiry, he was far from wishing to throw any impediment in the way of any noble Lord who might be disposed to institute any investigation into any other branch of the public distress. Still less did he mean to check any inclination to inquire into the expense of public establishments, or to urge that economy, always expedient, but now indispensable to the welfare of the country. But the latter were among the daily duties of their Lordships, while the proposition he had to make related to a subject which seldomer called for their immediate attention. He meant to confine the proposition he had to make, to the appointment of a committee on the foreign trade of the country. He had chosen this course, because he was convinced that any more extensive inquiry would only open an arena, into which every chivalrous political economist would hasten to take his stand; into which every theory would be introduced, and where every opposing interest would have found a field of combat. In any committee of general inquiry, useful discussion would be impracticable, endless contests would arise, and inquiries would be pursued without leading to any result. But, in limiting the proposal of investigation to one single but important object, he begged it might not be concluded, that he had it in view to protect or promote the interest of any particular body in the country, in preference to others. He certainly had no such intention, but, on the contrary, had limited his proposition to a subject which he conceived intimately connected with the interest of the whole country. But, whatever course their Lordships might determine to pursue, whether that of a limited or a general inquiry, if ever they were to entertain a design so unjust as that of favoring one interest or one body of the State, at the expense of any other, such a project would be impossible. So inseparably connected were the interests of society, so powerfully did the laws which Providence had imposed on those interests operate—for in regulating the wants they also regulated the actions of men—that any partiality of this kind was impracticable. Whenever it should be attempted to fence round any particular interest, and afford an exclusive protection from a general calamity, that interest would experience a re-action worse than the evil complained of, and find itself more exposed by the very barrier erected for its defence. Such a proceeding could only tend to bring on the body whom it was wished to favor, increased humiliation and distrust. The experience of the last ten years could not be thrown away on their Lordships, and he trusted it would not on the country. In the year 1815, they had seen the distress of the agricultural body visited on the other interests of the community. They had after-

wards found the distress of the manufacturing interest visited on the growers of corn and the raisers of every kind of agricultural produce. From these alternate visitations, who could fail to see that the order of Nature had linked together all the interests of men in society, and that it was nothing less than the height of folly and madness, to attempt to prop up any one class at the expense of another? The house had pronounced an opinion, some years ago, on the extent to which the principle of the corn laws should be carried, and he would not now go into an inquiry which he thought already disposed of—namely, whether the agricultural interest was sufficiently protected. He could not, however, help observing, that in looking at the petitions on the table, the opinion, that this country ought to be rendered independent of foreign corn, seemed to be adopted in some of them. The petitioners wished for prices which would give them the advantage they possessed in time of war; but they ought to consider, that the effect of the continued operation of high prices must be to leave no country open for export. What then would be the result of sudden depression? If an extraordinarily abundant harvest produced low prices, the farmer would be ruined by a revolution in prices without its natural remedy, and the manufacturer would participate in his distress. The lesson of experience on this subject would not be forgotten by their Lordships. In considering a part they would look to the whole, and would not allow themselves to be seduced by views of partial interests, from devoting their attention to the effect of any measure which might be proposed, on the general prosperity of the whole country. There were some speculative persons to be found, who thought that this country would be more prosperous were it independent of manufactures, and that it would be desirable to establish its interest solely on the basis of agriculture as the most sound and invariable, though necessarily the most limited. Without entering into the discussion of the question of the advantage or disadvantage of manufactures, it was sufficient to call to recollection that this was a subject on which the country had no longer a choice. Commerce and manufactures had made the country what it was, and by them alone could it be maintained in the rank to which it had been raised. No axiom was more true than this—that it was by growing what the territory of a country could grow most cheaply, and by receiving from other countries what it could not produce except at a greater expense, that the greatest degree of happiness was to be communicated to the greatest extent of population. No man could anticipate the loss of foreign commerce without at the same time contemplating a reduction of the population of the country in a way which would produce the most deplorable distress.

Whether the population were to be estimated at 12 millions, or more or less, if the number created and supported by foreign commerce be three, or two, or one, what would be the consequence of its loss? However small the proportion of the population the destruction of which might be contemplated, it could not be annihilated by any process, however gradual, without the greatest suffering, not confined to that portion only, but at the same time inflicting miseries not to be described on the remaining portion. Whatever inquiry was instituted, whatever measure might be adopted, their Lordships must proceed upon the principle of protecting all those interests which had made the country a great agricultural, commercial, and manufacturing nation. No interest could be separated, for all the various classes of the community depended on each other; and it might be said of each, as the poet had finely said of man in society—

“He, like the generous vine, supported lives,

“The strength he gains is from th’ embrace he gives.”

He was, however, aware that their Lordships must not proceed rashly, and that the investigation into which he trusted they would enter required the greatest deliberation, for there were many difficulties to be overcome. He remembered to have heard an anecdote relative to an interview between Dr. Adam Smith and Mr. Burke, which was very applicable to the present subject:—Dr. Smith reproached Mr. Burke for not at once proposing the abolition of the laws against forestalling, and asked what prevented Parliament from passing an act to declare forestalling free? Mr. Burke, in reply, remarked, “You Doctor, in your Professor’s chair, may deal with these propositions as with the pure mathematics; we statesmen must lay our account to the resistance of prejudice and the force of error.” He knew their Lordships would have much of prejudice to contend with in the course of their inquiry, and many interests to consider in connexion with the question of foreign commerce. He thought it therefore necessary to call their attention to the nature of the general distress, which formed the ground for their investigation. For a long period, owing to the nature of the warfare in which Europe had been involved, whether originating in the unbounded ambition of an individual, or the weakness and want of principle in governments, or some new and irresistible current in the opinions of mankind, every nation in Europe had made unusual exertions and undergone an unusual excitement; whatever had been the cause, the effect was, that nations had been induced to live on their capital instead of their revenue; and a consequence of this state of things was, that a numerous population had been called into existence by a great artificial demand for labor. It was, however, impossible that this state of expenditure could continue; but the population remained when the capital was gone, and the quantity of supply of labor, when the demand had ceased for it, was the

great cause of the existing distress. Those countries which, from their financial system and their geographical situation, were enabled to expend most of their capital, and for a time to give encouragement to the greatest quantities of productive labor, have mortgaged their revenues, and are in a situation to feel the general distress in a greater degree than poorer countries, which could not spend their capital. Such had been the effect produced by the great expenditure their Lordships had experienced. This he took to be the situation of the country, and it afforded a just, if not a satisfactory answer, to a question put to their Lordships by the petitioners of Birmingham—Why, when there was so much plenty in the land, so much distress was felt? The circumstances which he had mentioned, must be kept in view when their Lordships' attention was to be directed to find a remedy for the distress which he had described. The most obvious remedy then was, to create a demand for our labor and our manufactures, and the most obvious mode of creating that demand was, to encourage and to extend our foreign trade by removing some of those restrictions by which it was shackled. In looking towards such a relaxation, two things ought to be kept in view by their Lordships: first, the necessity of maintaining our revenue; and, secondly, the justice and expediency of consulting those interests which were vested in our existing trade, on the faith of the continuance of the regulations under which it was now carried on. But if those things were not to be lost sight of—they ought not to prevent changes which higher interests and a wiser policy demanded. With the necessity of attending to them, their Lordships ought to recollect that the policy which they involved was a departure from that which was dictated by sounder principles of political economy, and therefore ought to be limited to what the strict nature of the case required. They ought, in short, to recollect, that perfect freedom of trade should be the rule, and restraint only the exception. (Hear.) On this principle he would arrange the different points on which he meant to touch, and recommend the relaxations which he might venture to suggest. Without entering then into particular branches of our trade, or specifying particular articles, he would first of all venture to say, if it were only for the sake of getting rid of a principle as obnoxious to other countries as it was unsuitable to our own policy, that there ought to be no prohibitory duties, as such—that where a manufacture could not be carried on, or a production raised, but under the protection of a prohibitory duty, that manufacture or that produce must be brought to market at a loss. The name of prohibition might therefore in commerce be got rid of altogether; but he did not see the same objection to protecting duties, which, while they admitted of the introduction of commodities from abroad, similar to those which

we ourselves manufactured, placed them so much on a level as to allow a competition between them. The next point to which he would advert was one of more practical and immediate importance, as it affected a principle on which the government of this country had long been carried on, and in the observance of which it had attained its present power and greatness—he meant the principle of the navigation-laws. The relaxation which he would propose in those laws was not of a nature, nor to an extent, which ought to excite any jealousy in those who looked to them as one of the sources of our national security, nor any alarm in the ship-owners and others, whose interests were considered as so intimately connected with their strict maintenance. All the relaxation he would suggest would be, to allow produce from all parts of Europe to be imported, without making it necessary that it should be altogether in English-built ships, or in ships belonging to the nation whence the produce comes. At present a vessel which had taken part of its cargo in a French port, and which afterwards had proceeded to a Flanders port for the remainder, could not enter a British port. All that he would propose would be, to allow such a vessel to make good its assortment in different ports in Europe, and still to have the right of entering this country. He would make one exception to this relaxation of the navigation-laws—he would not allow the importation of colonial produce in this manner. The third point to which he would advert was one of no inconsiderable importance in itself, and of still greater consequence from the principle which it involved—he meant an entire freedom of the transit trade. Such a change would tend to encourage the warehousing system, and would thus promote the desirable object of rendering our ports the *depôt* of other foreign nations. Whatever brought the foreign merchant to this country, and made it a general mart—a *depôt* for the merchandise of the world, which might be done consistently with the levying of a small duty, was valuable to our trade, and enriched the industrious population of our ports. Such freedom of transit allowed of assortment of cargoes for foreign markets, and thus extended our trade in general. He was aware that the abolition of transit duties was formerly opposed by those who wished to protect the linen trade of Ireland, and he willingly allowed that that trade deserved peculiar protection. A duty of 15 per cent. on the importation of foreign linens was, during the war, thought necessary to protect the linen manufactures of Ireland. No injury resulted from that arrangement while we engrossed the commerce of the world, while no vessel could sail without a British convoy, and while we could force our own commodities into foreign markets in preference to others, for which there was a greater demand; but now

the case was altered, and many who were interested in the linen manufacture of Ireland thought a relaxation of the transit duty advisable. Indeed it could not be forgotten, that this manufacture had flourished to as great an extent as ever before it was protected by any duty; but whatever was the policy of imposing that duty or continuing it during the war, the same reasons would not now justify its continuance. If we refused to admit German linen without the payment of a transit duty, the foreigner would rather go to Germany for the article; he would then either pay the duty which we imposed, or take a less valuable article as a substitute; and as linen might be a necessary article in the assortment of his cargo, this duty would drive him away altogether, even when desirous of obtaining other articles which our soil or industry could supply. He wished to see the linen trade of Ireland protected, but he was sure that a transit duty could not afford it that protection. He now came to a fourth point, which involved important interests—he meant the state of the trade with the north of Europe, and the duties imposed on the importation of timber from that quarter. But first of all, before he touched on the policy of such duties, and the grounds on which their continuance was defended, he must recall to the recollection of their Lordships the circumstances in which they originated. These high duties, then, were not imposed as a part of our permanent colonial system, nor were they imposed for the express advantage of the ship-owners, who had now such an interest in their continuance. Neither was any pledge given, or hopes held out to the ship-owners, at the time, that the duties were to be maintained for their benefit. The measure was expressly of a temporary nature, and was necessarily to be brought under review in March next. The interests now vested in the timber-trade to our North American Colonies grew out of what was considered as a temporary arrangement, and had of course no security against a change which the general interests of the nation might require. It would easily be allowed, that the shipping interest did feel, and were justified in feeling, a strong reluctance to the removal of a tax, which, by allowing the country to obtain timber nearer home, would throw many vessels out of employment belonging to that respectable body. The navigation-laws of the country, with which they connected their interests, he was by no means prepared to condemn in principle; but was prepared to submit, that however desirable a perfect freedom of trade might be, there might be found instances in which, from political considerations, advantage and security were to be purchased by promoting an expensive navigation of British vessels. But it was one thing to agree to the justness of a principle properly restricted, and another to admit its unlimited operation; and nothing,

it was allowed, could be more detrimental to commerce than the imposing of a heavy duty on a raw material. And what was the reasoning of the ship-owners in their petition against an abolition of this duty? He should be sorry to misrepresent their arguments, and would therefore read the statement from their own petition. They represent that, from the length and difficulty of the voyage to North America, the larger part of the value of the timber thence imported consists of freight; and that the mere circumstance of the proximity of the northern ports of Europe, by enabling ships to repeat their voyages frequently in the course of a year, would reduce the number of British vessels employed in the timber-trade to one-third. They therefore say, that whereas it is expedient that they should be employed—and whereas they cannot be so employed if they procure timber where it is cheapest and best—they therefore should import it of the worst quality, and from the greatest distance. (Hear, hear.) This was the proposition they propounded when the question was, whether we should import our timber from our own colonies or from the Baltic. And let their Lordships consider what the article was, that was thus to be raised in price, while it was deteriorated in quality; it was the raw material of our houses, of our bridges, of our canals, and in some degree of our shipping itself: and so inconsistent were the petitioners, that they asked to continue duties which increased the expense of their own trade. A great part of the capital which they had vested in their business, and of the expense which they incurred, was rendered necessary by the high price of the article which they thus wished to increase by heavy duties. But let the house observe to what consequences the principle laid down by the petitioners would go, if carried to its extreme length, and applied to other branches of trade. Suppose it were proposed, on the same plea, to bring our cotton from the East Indies instead of importing it from America, he did not see on what grounds those could resist such a proposition, who argued that we ought to import our timber from Canada rather than from Norway. The voyage would have the advantage of being thrice as long, and the article might be tripled in price. A petition from Newcastle had stated, that by resorting to the Baltic for timber, not one half the number of vessels would be employed that now sailed to America; which was just as good a reason for going to the latter country as we should have for employing double the number of horses for carrying the mails, when the present number was found, by the admirable system now established, to be sufficient. But if their Lordships did not lose sight of all principle, and allow that particular interests ought alone to be consulted, they would see that the general good would be better consulted by the employment of our shipping in a gene-

ral extension of our trade, than in adding unnecessary expenses to one branch of it. The ship-owners could not certainly, by an abolition of the duties, have employment for their vessels to the same extent; but as the imports from Russia and Prussia would increase, and as they would have nearly the whole of that trade, the falling off might not be so great as they anticipated. And with regard to the argument employed by them, against renewing our intercourse with the north of Europe, namely, that those who supplied us with timber from that quarter would not receive British manufactures in return, it appeared to him futile and ungrounded. If they did not send direct for our manufactures at home, they sent for them to Leipsic and other fairs of Germany. Were not the Russian and Polish merchants purchasers there to a great amount? But he would never admit the principle, that a trade was not profitable because we were obliged to carry it on with the precious metals, or that we ought to renounce it because our manufactures were not received by the foreign nation in return for its produce. Whatever we receive must be paid for in the produce of our land and labor, directly or circuitously; and he was glad to perceive that he had the noble Earl's (Liverpool) marked concurrence in this principle. We had been long in the habit of sending out the precious metals to the East Indies; but we purchased the gold and silver thus exported with our manufactures sent to America. The ship-owners who were interested in the question, ought to look at the quality and the cheapness of the article which they could receive from the Baltic; and consider what influence that would have on the expenses of ship-building, which so nearly concerned them. The whole subject would, however, be investigated by the committee, who would consider how much of the duty might be taken off the timber from the north, whether what was left might not be more fairly and advantageously raised by being proportioned to the bulk of the deals, (those of Norway being generally smaller,) and what regulations might be adopted to reserve to Canada the supply of masts, for which its timber was peculiarly fitted: that of wood for slighter articles, of turnery and furniture, owing to its greater softness for working, she would not fail to retain. It deserved serious consideration, how much more we paid for the timber from Canada than we should pay for that from the north of Europe. By a calculation which he had made, the difference was not less than 500,000*l.* annually for the whole country, and in the port of London alone 100,000*l.* had been paid on account of this prohibitory duty. He would now advert to another subject, of great importance—the state of our trade with France, and particularly in the article of wine. Their Lordships must know that a duty of 143*l.* 18*s.* was

imposed upon the tun of French wine, while only 95*l.* was imposed upon Spanish and Portuguese wines. There had been a falling-off in the duty in the last year, of 220,000*l.* Now, although the government of France was not disposed to enter into any commercial treaty, or to make any liberal arrangement for receiving our manufactures in exchange for their wine, he would not allow but that some change should be made in our present trade with that country. Even though the government were not disposed at first to enter into any specific treaty, the people would find their advantage in the intercourse; and although we might be obliged, in the first place, to pay in bullion, our manufactures would go abroad to other countries, to purchase that bullion. He need not again repeat, that for a long course of time we had been exporting bullion to the East Indies, and that we were obliged to export manufactures to America for the purpose of procuring it. The consent of Portugal to any beneficial arrangement of this kind with France, would not necessarily be required; as, if we did not enforce our claim to send Portugal our woollens, they had no right to demand of us to take their wines. This, however, might be settled by a short negociation. What he had said with regard to the wines of France would apply likewise to its silks: and if our own manufacturers in silk were to suffer temporarily, by a removal of the prohibitory duties, this was one of the cases in which policy might justify what humanity would demand—a parliamentary grant for compensation to the families employed. He had now gone through all the points of our trade with respect to Europe, and had given his views of the changes which he thought ought to be adopted. He now came to a subject, which, with whatever difficulties it might be surrounded, he looked to with great satisfaction in one point of view, as it might hold out to the shipping interest, which might be in some degree affected by what he had lately suggested as to the importation of timber, advantages far more extensive, more promising, and more durable. It would be impossible for their Lordships not to recollect and to apply the fact, that from one of the largest, most fertile, and most populous portions of the globe, that immense space which lay between Africa and America, the general British merchant was excluded. From the time that he doubled Cape Horn, or the Cape of Good Hope, he found his commercial operations cramped, and his enterprise restrained; not by the nature of the country, for it was full of ports and rivers, and adapted to commerce; not by the indisposition of the people to trade, for they were numerous, industrious, and disposed to exchange their productions for ours; not by the difficulties of the seas, for, by the trade-winds and the monsoons, navigation was rendered easy and secure; but he was pursued,

and all his schemes defeated, by the statute-book. (Hear, hear.) It was this that restrained him from trading from one part to another without a licence. It was this which prevented him from dealing in one of the most valuable and lucrative articles of trade, viz.—tea. He would not speak with disrespect of the body of the East-India Company, but he would say, that it traded under all the disadvantages which have ever been found to belong to a monopoly. He was convinced, from the interest which that body must feel in the national welfare, that they would not refuse to allow others to enjoy what they themselves were unable to enjoy ; and this was all that he wanted to ground his proposition upon. If the private trade were perfectly unrestricted, much smaller vessels might be employed, and many merchants would engage in it who could not fit out a ship of 500 tons burden. There existed many nations whose ports and rivers were accessible to smaller vessels, who were now never visited. They composed a population of upwards of 70,000,000 ; and he would beg leave to read a passage from a book lately published by a gentleman who had been long employed in the Eastern Islands, showing the facilities for commerce in the Eastern seas, the great wealth which they offered, and the little trade that was now carried on in them. The noble Marquis recommended this as a field for our commerce, in case some alterations were admitted in the rights exercised by the East-India Company. He was well aware that all such trades must have slow and small beginnings ; but he was also aware that it was in encouraging those slow and small beginnings that the legislature of a country was best employed. He recollected a story, which, though it was not much in itself, deserved some notice from their Lordships, since it had been put upon record by Dr. Franklin, as a complete illustration of the doctrine which he (the Marquis of Lansdown) was then advancing. Dr. Franklin related that his wife, conceiving herself to be under obligation to a ship-owner at Maytown, made a practice for some years, of sending a cap annually to his daughter as a present. After this practice had lasted for some time, the Doctor stated that he accidentally met this ship-owner, in company with a farmer of the same town, in Philadelphia. The ship-owner said to him, “A dear cap that was, friend, which you sent to us at Maytown.” “How so?” replied the Doctor. “Why, since you sent us it, none of our young women will go out without one.” The farmer hereupon interrupted the ship-owner, and told him that he was only telling one side of the story ; for he ought to have added, that it was only since those caps had been sent to Maytown that their young women had been accustomed to send mittens to Philadelphia, it being by the sale of their mittens that they were able to procure the Philadelphia caps. (Laughter.) This story he (the Marquis

of Lansdown) confessed was a trifle in itself : but trifles such as these, like the seeds which, first scattered by the breeze, at length fasten on the soil, when they come to operate upon the minds of bold and enterprising men, produce consequences that affect the prosperity and happiness of nations ; so it was that the foundations of all those trades were laid, which the merchants of this country had carried on with so much industry and success, and which he trusted that they would carry on with still greater industry and success when they were allowed to embark in them free from those restrictions by which they had hitherto been shackled. Indeed, when he considered the effects which had followed the opening of a free trade, in the only quarter where it had yet been permitted, he could not for a moment doubt of the benefit which the commercial interests of the country would receive from the removal of those restrictions under which they had hitherto labored. Their Lordships would recollect that six years ago, when the trade to the East Indies was not open, there was no independent British tonnage on the other side of the Cape of Good Hope. At present he was happy to inform them, that there were in the Eastern seas 20,000 tons of shipping in the service of the East India Company, but 61,000 in the service of the free traders. Was there any one among their Lordships, seeing, as they all had seen, the rapid strides with which British commerce had advanced in that quarter of the globe, bold enough to say, that the advantages of a free trade might not be carried still further even there, and might not be rendered productive of even still more important results ? But whilst upon this subject, there was another point which he wished to press upon the notice of their Lordships, and which was this—that the free trade employed 4,720 British seamen, whilst the trade of the East-India Company employed only 2,550 of them. This fact particularly deserved their attention, because it displayed the benefits of a free trade, even in quarters where benefits were least of all to be expected. Whenever a free trade to other countries, nearer home, had been proposed, their Lordships and the country had been told that the opening of such trade would be highly inexpedient, because it would throw out of employment a certain number of British seamen ; but, now that the trade was opened to the East Indies, it was proved that it not only did not throw any of them out of employment, but actually opened a field for the employment of an additional number of them. It was true that in the vessels employed in the free trade there were only 7 men to every 100 tons, whereas, in the East-India service, there were 20 men to the same quantity of tonnage ; but did that circumstance prove any thing against a free trade, connected, as they ought to connect it, with the fact that the number of seamen engaged in that free trade was greater than the number engaged by the

East-India Company? It only proved the superior skill and economy of labor, with which individual interest would conduct a trade to profit, when compared with that of a corporation proceeding upon rule and habit without the same stimulus.

After some further observations upon this subject, the Noble Marquis proceeded to contend that it was a peculiar hardship, that in countries where the British had established an unprecedented power, and where they exercised an uncontrolled dominion, an American should be at liberty to carry on a trade in which it was not allowed to an Englishman to engage. The trade to which he alluded was the exportation of tea, from China to Europe, which he understood was in the proportion of ten to one in the hands of the American merchant; nor was this at all surprising, for he not only derived a benefit from the liberty which he possessed, of assorting his cargo when and where he pleased, but also from the liberty which he enjoyed of supplying France, Holland, and other parts of the continent, with that commodity, tea, which the East-India Company did not choose to do themselves, and which their charter did not permit any of their fellow-countrymen to supply their place by doing. The consequence of this extraordinary state of things had been, that, while the British trade at Canton had been stationary during the last thirteen years, their trade had made most rapid increase; and, indeed, during the last three years, had increased a full third of its former value. He would next proceed to show to their Lordships another point in which our commercial regulations gave an advantage to the American merchant trading in the eastern seas, which was not enjoyed by our own. Both must go to South America for bullion; and, for the sake of argument, he would suppose that Valparaiso was the port to which both went. The English merchant, after taking in his bullion, is obliged to return to England, and then cannot set sail for India until he has refitted his ship. The American merchant, on the contrary, sails directly from Valparaiso to his place of destination, disposes of one cargo and takes in another, almost before the English merchant is able to set sail a second time from England. Indeed, he had been informed, in the course of that morning, that at the present moment certain Americans were fitting up vessels in the Thames, in order to undertake a beneficial venture, which no Englishman could hazard with safety under the present regulations. Was it right that such a circumstance should be allowed to occur in this, which had been justly denominated the most commercial country in the world? He did not grudge to the United States the advantage of any trade which their circumstances and situation enabled them to carry on with greater advantage than ourselves; but were we to create our own incapacity? Was it either right or expedient, that

this country should extend to Americans the privileges of a trade from which she excluded her own inhabitants, who were equally well, if not better, calculated to carry it on, from their habits, their industry, and their spirit of enterprise? So fully was he convinced of the inexpediency of such a restriction, that nothing could induce him to believe that the East-India Company would not, if applied to, allow Englishmen to supply France, and Holland, and Germany, with tea from Canton, as readily as she allowed the American merchant to do so. He felt this, from the peculiar value of the trade, and the great elements of future prosperity connected with it, to be the most important consideration he had to urge; and it was the last topic of a strictly commercial nature on which he should allow himself to comment. He should next proceed—unwilling as he was to touch upon any political question, on an occasion when he had no wish to excite any political feeling—to say a few words upon certain subjects, which, though they were connected with the politics, were not less connected with the commerce, of the country. He was not prepared to say that the British Government ought to exert its influence to procure the immediate independence of South America—by no means; but he was prepared to say that, considering the manner in which the trade of its subjects had increased at Buenos Ayres, where it was liable to no restrictions during the years 1810, 1811, and 1812—considering that since the latter of these periods it had even increased there to a two-fold amount, and that similar results had taken place in every other part of that great continent where British manufactures had been introduced, it was bound, by every tie of feeling and of interest, to cement the connexion which already subsisted between the inhabitants of the two countries, by the utmost good faith, kindness, and liberality. To cement that connexion would not be a difficult task for this country, as there was none better calculated to inspire the South Americans with sentiments of respect and affection. First, it was a maritime country, able to give them support and assistance whenever they should stand in need of it; secondly, if it repealed the restrictions with which it had guarded its commerce up to the present day, it would stand before them as a country ready to receive their produce on the most favorable terms, and seeking nothing else, in its relation with them, than the happiness and prosperity of both parties. And why should they not repeal these restrictions? Their Lordships, he was sure, were well aware that, in the year previous to the commencement of the unfortunate war which terminated in the establishment of American independence, our exports to the United States did not amount to more than 3,000,000*l.*; whereas at present they amounted to no less a sum than 30,000,000*l.* Was this great and amazing increase the result of restrictive laws and

provisions? Certainly not: it was the result of the increased prosperity and population of those States, and of their becoming, in consequence of it, greater consumers of our produce and manufactures. If such had been the case with North America, did not that very circumstance render it still more the interest of the British Government to consolidate its friendship with those countries in the south, which were desirous of securing its friendship, which under the odious government from which Spain had recently emancipated itself, had never been open to us, and which, even under the government which had just succeeded to it, were not likely to be more accessible to us? The Noble Marquis then stated, that the political state of Ireland must also form an important feature in the future prospects of British trade. If ever there was a people calculated to give employment to capital, and to become great consumers of manufactured goods, it was the people of Ireland. Every exertion made to civilize their habits and improve their political condition, would react upon our own prosperity, and afford a perpetually increasing demand. Our religious and commercial jealousies had cramped her growth; our confidence and sympathy might expand it no less for our own benefit than for hers. He would now conclude; though not very sanguine in his expectations of immediate relief to the present distress of the country, he could not, with the feelings which he entertained regarding British enterprise, British skill, and British ingenuity, abandon the hope of ultimate success and revived exertions, whilst there was any part of the globe unexplored, or only partially explored, to which our trade could penetrate. Our merchants, if they were now oppressed with the difficulties which he had before described, were not, however, deprived of that high character, that good faith, and that persevering industry, which had always distinguished them. In whatever part of the world they appeared they still maintained their ancient pre-eminence; and thus acquired, wherever they went, a preference over those of other nations. These were his grounds of hope; and on these he looked forward with confidence to the arrival of more favorable times. He had now stated the object of his motion: all that he asked of their Lordships was, to consult the genius of their country, for that support which was so necessary to renew and invigorate its resources; and to apply to those principles for the preservation of their commerce, to which they were indebted for its original prosperity. He could assure them, that he had not willingly brought the subject forward, but that it had forced itself, through him, upon the House, owing to the reluctance exhibited by Ministers to entertain it. He then concluded his speech by moving for the appointment of a select committee, to examine into the state of the foreign trade, and the best means of extending it.





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